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Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Harp and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Melissa Marshall. I live in West Hartford and I'm here today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, a coalition representing people from all disability groups. I'm here today to urge you to restore funding for Centers for Independent Living in the biennium budget.

For those were not familiar with the Centers for Independent Living, they are nonprofit organizations whose Board of Directors must be comprised of a majority of people disabilities and they typically employ people with disabilities as staff. The funding that has been cut enables the centers to provide four core services of independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy and information and referral. No one lives in a Center, rather Centers provide the support and facilitates empowerment which allows people with all types of disabilities to live independently in the community. Funding also supports the Centers in preventing unwanted and unnecessary institutionalization and enable people who don't want to live in institutions to remain in the community.

Not only are Centers cost-effective, they actually save the State money. Last year the Centers saved the state \$5,454,096 . This is ten times the funding that they receive from the State. Many others will be talking to about this savings in greater detail as the hearing progresses.

A number of you serve on the I/DD Caucus and are all too familiar with the struggles that people with intellectual disabilities and their families encounter on a daily basis. Centers can and do serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as people with physical, sensory, psychiatric disabilities, brain injury and autism. The proposed budget cut is yet another instance when people with disabilities and families are being told that they will not receive vital support that they need to be independent. We have been told to "be creative" and to "do more with less". Centers enable people with disabilities to do just that. The Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance urges you not to slam another door shut in the face of people who are striving to be independent, to be productive citizens and to protect their civil rights.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.